6: Vinci T-5 (1950) 1959 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
Sanema
Makiritare SS 20

Pedro had settled for quarters near us, but not inside the hut itself, which was periodically invaded by Shirians: he erected a little roof among the trees between us and the river, where there were less insects than elsewhere. He would come over in the evening and chat to us, sitting on the table, by the light of the hurricane lamp which Giovanni managed to get going after a struggle. Pedro came in useful. It was thanks to him that we were able to set up a price list, or a list of exchange values, putting a definite value on any work the Indians cared to do for us and the little fruit and greenstuff they could provide. The list showed, for instance, that a whole hand of bananas was worth one small looking-glass, and that five looking-glasses would buy one tapir. One pine-apple was exchangeable for one box of matches; four sewing needles for one sugar-cane; and one little tin of salt was the reward of a day's labour—that is, a day spent with us, stretched out in a hammock and singing, with requests for a share of our food every time one of us got busy near the fire. In most cases our price was a theoretical one, our actual supplies of goods being exhausted until the plane dropped us more. Nevertheless, we took care to make our price list known to all with the most eloquent explanations.

In spite of this, some funny things happened. The rate for an antelope was five bolivars—a rather theoretical sum, equivalent in practice, for example, to one lima. We were also interested in the skin of any animal, part of our purpose being to collect them. For a whole antelope skin, we paid one bolivar or its equivalent in a reel of cotton, or a spoonful of lead shot, or two small hooks, etc. As a consequence, we would have an Indian come to give us a day's work, at the regular rate. During the day, paid by us, he would shoot, with our gun, an antelope which he expected us to pay for while he kept the skin. The skin was sold to us separately, while the meat would provide meals which he or his friends and relations shared with us.

On the Kirisochi savannah there thus arose some very complicated auditing problems. We decided to burn our price list and put our trust in our powers of improvisation.

VII

When Luis Antonio came back, we set out with him to climb the Sariṭariṭama, the deity that watched over the source of the Canaracuni. Enrico, Giovanni, and I were in the party. Luis brought a kinsman, and there was also

9:Grelier K-5 (1951) 1957 SQ18 Yanoama SQ 18

his jungle intimately—where to find palm dates, cocoa and brazil nuts in their season, and where game birds are most plentifully found. He hunts the herds of peccary, his ear, versed in all the sounds of the forest, detecting his prey before they detect him. When the water in the rivers is low he shoots his fish with arrows and when the sand banks are uncovered he hunts tortoise eggs buried in the sand. His interminable wanderings are limited only by his forest lore; he lives only for the day, his sole reserve of food being a small store of bananas brought from the village plantation.

Platanal

As we closed the shore our reception was tumultuous. From the high bank above us the Indians leaped yelling into the water and clambered on board, shaking themselves like wet dogs. Laughing and gesticulating they took hold of our mooring lines. Though some of us were a little overcome by this display of exuberance, Butrón was not in the least disconcerted. He knew that the Indians had long learned to associate him with machetes and *manioc*. As soon as it was possible to do so, Butrón had a basket of *manioc* and a dozen machetes carried ashore, and the Indians who had already begun to ransack our cargo left it and hurried ashore.

"*Shori! Manioco! Oji!*" they cried striking their bellies. They jostled round the basket, stuffing handfuls of the coarse flour into their mouths, their heads thrown back in ecstasy.

As the Waïka have no knowledge of contriving the simplest of iron tools, or of grinding *manioc*, all such articles were highly valued objects of barter. So were matches, once they had been shown how to use them.

Butrón told them we wanted the large green bananas which are eaten cooked; the accepted tariff is three hands of bananas for one machete. Before long, we heard some of the natives making merry in the plantation, and made as if to follow them. But at once the others became suspicious and gestured to us to return to the river bank. We insisted and they became menacing, finally refusing to go on gathering the bananas if we did not desist.